



Here is the latest weather forecast for the summer, brought to you by the Planning Department:

Temperatures will climb, the political barometer will remain variable, and Planning will continue to work on improving the local development climate. In the rest of the news . . .

DEVELOPMENT STREAMLINING

Earlier this month, we announced an initiative that can save considerable time and paperwork for certain development projects. Planning will support requests to waive normal platting requirements for proposed projects that are to be governed by Community Unit Plans (CUPs). On the "front end" of development review, that means saving 1-2 months and eliminating the need to file a separate preliminary plat, which contains the same information as the CUP. On the "rear end", developers can save 2-4 weeks by waiving the normal requirement for the Planning Commission to approve the final plat, and allow the plat to be approved administratively. Eventually, we believe that similar efficiencies can be achieved for other types of applications that run through the Planning Department.

If you have questions on this new process, or have questions or suggestions on other aspects of development review, please e-mail Ray Hill in our office at rhill@ci.lincoln.ne.us or call him at 441-6371.

We are also moving ahead on various efforts to improve communications:



❖ Internally, we have established a standing **weekly meeting** to review newly filed applications with staff from Public Works, Building and Safety, and Health. This will allow us to identify potential issues earlier, communicate those comments earlier to applicants, and hopefully resolve more issues prior to public hearings.

- ❖ Planning and Public Works are exploring the purchase of the same computer **software** now used by Building and Safety to track their building permits, so that the various departments involved in development review and our customers can all access information from one integrated database.
- ❖ We are attaching a **customer satisfaction survey** to each development application. The survey gives me feedback on our department's performance and allows for comments and suggestions on ways that we can improve our services.
- ❖ We are also designing a **3-month calendar** of all the tentative dates on which key planning projects will be considered at various board and committee meetings, open houses, workshops, etc., which will be posted on the internet.

COMP PLAN AMENDMENTS

The first annual review of the Comprehensive Plan that was adopted last June is well underway. Staff has received proposals for 19 amendments to the plan, and released a report with recommendations on those proposed amendments that can be reviewed on our webpage. The Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a public hearing to consider the amendments at a special meeting on May 21st.

The 6-year Capital Improvement Program for Lincoln has been developed by the Mayor's Capital Improvements Advisory Committee and submitted to the Planning Commission and City Council. The CIP will be considered by the Planning Commission at the same May 21st meeting. The Planning Commission's responsibility is to review the proposed projects in the CIP for their consistency with the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The proposed CIP has been significantly expanded in terms of dollars assumed and number of projects to be constructed, to meet the goals in the adopted plan to open up new development areas, construct improvements in new areas concurrently with development, and step up the level of rehabilitation and replacement of facilities in the City's older neighborhoods.

Along with these items, staff is preparing the first annual report on "benchmarks" and "indicators" to monitor the community's progress in achieving key goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, and a progress report on the dozens of initiatives proposed in the Plan. Most of this information is available on the department's webpage or will be soon. Contact Steve Henrichsen at 441-6374 or shenrichsen@ci.lincoln.ne.us or Duncan Ross at 441-7603 or dross@ci.lincoln.ne.us if you have questions or comments.



Infrastructure Financing



The Mayor's Infrastructure Finance Committee was established last October to review the remaining "gap" in revenues to fund improvements for roads, water, sewer, and neighborhood park/trail improvements, assuming that impact fees are implemented. Their final report, which was released on May 15th, includes the following recommendations:

- ☒ Strongly tie the Comprehensive Plan and the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to ensure the efficient planning and construction of improvements;
- ☒ Gradually increase **water and sewer fees** for a series of years to adequately fund future improvements;
- ☒ Gradually increase the **local wheel tax**, over a period of years to help pay for new streets and rehabilitate existing ones;
- ☒ Implement an **occupation tax**, on the retail sale of vehicular fuel sold in Lincoln to help pay for street construction and rehabilitation projects;
- ☒ Seek voter approval for a **general obligation bond issue** for streets, sidewalks, and trails; and
- ☒ Support **more aggressive bonding** of utility and highway tax revenues.

The Committee's report stresses the need to ensure the infrastructure in existing neighborhoods is properly maintained, while improvements are put into place in the City's newer areas. This includes a strong endorsement for rehabilitating and replacing sidewalks, trails, and older streets in the City. The Committee endorsed State legislation to allow for the creation of a separate **stormwater utility** for building and maintaining drainage improvements, and agreed that a funding strategy should be developed to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan to preserve valuable and unique **open space** lands in the County.

The reports and meeting summaries covering this effort are available on the department's webpage at <http://interlinc/ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/plan/mifc/index.htm>. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact Kent Morgan in our office at 441-7491 or at kmorgan@ci.lincoln.ne.us. Kent has spent countless hours working on this marathon project, but still managed to complete the half-marathon race on May 4th.



ACREAGES

This community, like many others, has struggled for years with the issues of where, when, and how to permit development in rural areas. The Comprehensive Plan identified the need to undertake several studies that will lead to a better understanding of these issues, and hopefully, a more systematic approach. These studies include:

- **"Build-through"**, which will produce new standards to ensure that any rural density subdivisions approved in Lincoln's defined growth area are designed to easily accommodate future redevelopment into smaller, urban density lots when public water and sewer and other urban services have been extended to those subdivisions. Public workshops were held last month, and more are scheduled for the evenings of May 28th and 29th, with a final report expected in June. It appears that for this concept to be successful, lots will need to be smaller and served by interim community sewers, and/or substantial land adjoining acreages will need to be reserved for urban development.
- **"Cost of rural services"**, which examines the operating and capital costs to local taxpayers of providing services to residents and businesses in the unincorporated areas of Lancaster County, versus the revenues that are paid by those residents and businesses. A preliminary draft of this study is expected before the end of this month.
- **"Performance scoring"**, a tool for evaluating and comparing different tracts of land in the county that are being proposed for acreage lot development, to help the Planning Commission and elected officials decide whether or not that type of development is appropriate when applications are filed. A preliminary scoring system has been developed and is being refined based on comments from an ad-hoc advisory committee, the Agricultural Resource Group, which includes a variety of representative rural stakeholders. A proposed scoring system, along with ideas on how this system would be used in development review, should be available for public review next month.



All three of these studies are being coordinated by Mike DeKalb in our office; if you have questions you can reach him at mdekalb@ci.lincoln.ne.us or call him at 441-6370.

Marvin Krout, Planning Director
Lincoln/Lancaster County
Planning Department
555 South 10th Street, Suite 213
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-441-7491

